

The Big Creative Birmingham Conversation

Report

10th August 2022



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1. Introduction

This work was a series of engagement sessions using different formats to obtain ideas to create a statement of intent that will influence Birmingham's next arts and culture strategy. The new arts and culture strategy will guide the city in creating a unified and cohesive vision. By engaging many people in the creation of the statement of intent, it acts as a document that captures a plurality of opinions.

The statement of intent was co-produced with the residents of the city. This co-production is critical because it allows for the people of the city to define the terms of the document. Definition is an important concept in such a document because those with the power to define the terms are often those that benefit from the final product. Hence, the importance of co-producing a document that will have a wide-ranging effect upon a sector. Co-production also allows for citizens to ascribe importance to topics or areas. When such documents are done for and not with people, they typically reflect the biases and ideas of those who are writing them.

The aim of this work was to create different themes and sub-themes to conceptualise the important topics presented by participants. Here the term theme is used as an umbrella term, under which sub-themes sit. These sub-themes are formed by grouping together the comments and ideas of participants that naturally fit together. This grouping of ideas allows for a detailed and nuanced picture to form of a specific issue or area. These sub-themes are then placed into groups based upon how connected they are to each other. This then creates the themes.

The creation of a new cultural strategy is a project that progresses in stages. Due to the importance of co-producing such a document, each stage utilises citizen engagement methods. The first stage is to understand the dimensions of the arts and culture sector as seen from the position of those who interact with it in various ways. It is these ideas and opinions that will direct the next stage of the work. The outcome of this stage is the creation of a statement of intent, which will be used to influence the next strategy.

This work is organised across five sections. The methods section details how the data were gathered. The results section is organised in four parts. Firstly, the outcomes of the World Café and Mentimeter sessions are discussed. Secondly, the Twitter engagement event is covered. Thirdly, the Be Heard Survey data is analysed. Lastly, the pre-mortem sessions are analysed in contrast to the previous sessions. This was done because the pre-mortem was designed to identify future problems so comparing them to what had been discussed in the sessions creates a clear contrast. The earlier sections of the report create the basis for understanding the arts and culture sector as seen from the amalgamation of people's responses. The later sections focus on adding new ideas to this.

2. Methods

This work was completed by the Public Health and Arts and Culture teams working together. This partnership was created to take advantage of the diverse set of skills that these teams possess and because of the links between creative pursuits and health.

This work was comprised of two phases: 1) Engagement and data collection and 2) Data analysis. During engagement and data collection, several approaches were used to encourage participation, capture information, and learn from people. To avoid alienating people, a broad definition of arts and culture was used (see appendix 2 for more information). Following this, the data was analysed to identify key themes from people's thoughts and ideas.

2.1 Engagement and Data Collection

Effective engagement is the cornerstone of co-production. For this reason, events were organised to facilitate discussion and capture people's thoughts and ideas regarding the challenges in the arts and culture sector. Given the breadth of creative work that happens in Birmingham, it was crucial to engage as many individuals and groups as possible using a variety of methods to ensure as many voices and perspectives were captured as possible. This was done using targeted email lists to engage with known creatives, through advertising on Twitter and Instagram, and by placing the events on Eventbrite. Additionally, we handed out flyers and encouraged word of mouth at our events to generate more interest.

2.1.1 Summary – Methods

To understand resident's opinions in Birmingham, the following four methods were used:

1. World Cafés
 - a. This method of working with people focused on accessing collective intelligence, which is to say the total knowledge of a group of people. We organised in-person sessions in which people would sit at tables and discuss a set of four questions (see appendix 3 for more information). Participants were encouraged to move between tables to enable the transfer of ideas from one group to another. The knowledge generated by this method was recoded on flip chart paper using post it notes. There was also at least one facilitator per table that captured notes during discussions.
2. Virtual/online sessions
 - a. Virtual sessions were hosted because some people are unable to attend physical events. They were organised as a talk given via PowerPoint that would be broken up with questions (see appendix 4 for more information) whose answers were captured by the Mentimeter or via a facilitator in the session. Mentimeter is a platform that was used in the online sessions. It allows the creator to incorporate questions into a presentation, which participants can answer. The platform captures those answer so they can be analysed later.
3. Pre-mortem sessions
 - a. These were physical sessions and aimed at people who work in the cultural sector. The goal of this type of engagement is to predict and find solutions to problems before they occur. Therefore, the premise was that everything failed, and the goal was to understand why (see appendix 5 for more information). During the first part of the session, participants wrote down as many ideas as possible for why the next cultural strategy had failed, in this theoretical scenario. Once this was completed,

themes were created from the ideas. The participants then voted which of the two themes they thought most urgently needed to be addressed. Once the two themes were identified, the participants brain stormed ways to avoid the predicted reasons for failure.

4. Be Heard Surveys

- a. Using the online Be Heard platform, which is a council hosted service that allows citizens to provide their opinions to a series of pre-determined open or closed questions, a 42-question survey was created, which comprised of open and closed questions (see appendix 6 for more information). The Be Heard Survey was promoted through Twitter, Instagram, at the end of our sessions and at the end of emails from the Big Creative Birmingham Conversation mailbox. This survey opened on the 1st of June and closed on the 31st of July.

5. Twitter Engagement

- a. On the 22nd of July, there was a Twitter engagement event, during which people were able to express their views in response to six questions (see appendix 7 for more information). This was run by the BCC marketing team, and it lasted approximately two hours.

2.2 Data Analysis

The data was analysed using a grounded theory approach. This was used due to the data being primarily analysed by members of the BCC Public Health team, who had little knowledge of the culture sector. Using this approach allowed themes to develop holistically from the data, rather than imposing ideas that directed how themes were developed.

2.2.1 Summary of Data Analysis

This proceeded through the following four stages:

1. **Stage 1** – A project team consisting of five people, of which four had been involved in the engagement events assessed the reports and material from the World Café and Mentimeter sessions to identify common thoughts and ideas. By discussing the information and grouping similar thoughts and ideas together, the researchers were then able to create general themes from the information.
2. **Stage 2** – Using the general themes identified in stage 1 as a framework, a second round of analysis was completed of the World Café and Mentimeter data. In this round, the focus was searching for previously unidentified (sub-)themes from the work.
3. **Stage 3** – The Be Heard Survey data was analysed to identify common thoughts and ideas, as well as new concepts that had not been seen in the data so far.
4. **Stage 4** – Pre-mortem analysis. At this stage, we were interested to know how people's perceived risk to Birmingham's success aligned with the city's perceived problems.
5. **Stage 5** – Data from the Twitter engagement event was analysed to identify common thoughts and ideas, as well as new concepts that had not been seen in the data so far.

By completing these stages, information was gathered until no new ideas or themes were discovered.

3. Results

The results are presented in four sections. Appendix one details the 22 World Café and Mentimeter sessions, from which information is drawn upon to create the first section. The primary themes were created from this set of data. Then the information from the Twitter engagement is examined. The Be Heard Survey data is then presented, which is organised around ideas that led from the questions used in the survey. Finally, the Pre-Mortem data is presented. This was done at the end to discern if the pre-mortem session identified and addressed the important points raised in the other engagement sessions.

3.1 Scope of the Engagement Process

Tables 1 and 2 record the reach of the engagement process.

Table 1

Number of people engaged online and in-person sessions

Engagement Type	Online / In-Person	People Engaged
World Café	In-person	68
Mentimeter	Online	89
Be Heard Survey	Online	65
Pre-Mortem	In-person	5
Total Number Engaged	No information	277

Table 2

Size of response to the Twitter conversation

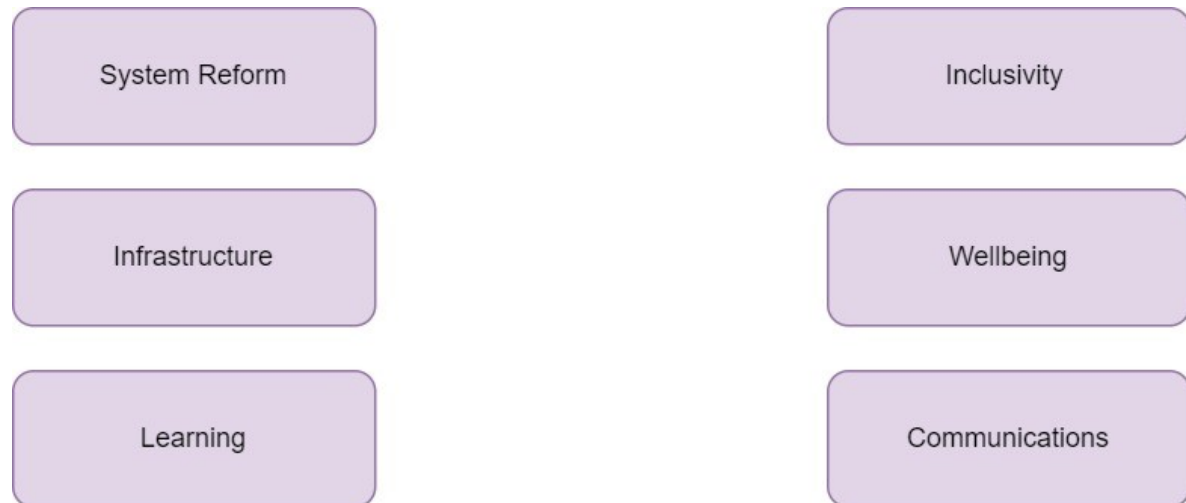
	Number of Replies	Comments	Hashtag Likes
Twitter Discussion	98	65	70

3.2 World Café and Mentimeter Session

The analysis of the World Café and Mentimeter session data provided us with the following six broad themes:

Figure 1

An overview of the themes



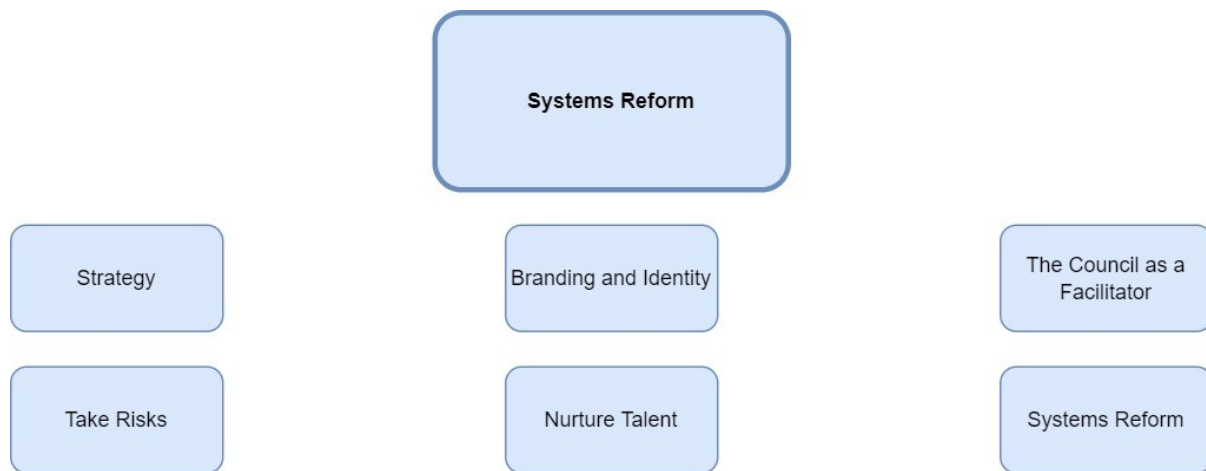
Within each of these themes, several related sub-themes were identified, which comprised of more specific ideas/topics and better enabled the expression of participant ideas.

3.2.1 Systems Reform

This theme is comprised of six sub-themes. It looks broadly at the direction participants believed the city should take as it moves forwards. The ideas that comprise the sub-themes typically consist of areas that participants felt need changing or creating. A visual representation of this theme can be seen in figure 2.

Figure 2

System Reform and its sub-themes



Strategy

The engagement sessions brought to the fore comments and ideas that led to the creation of the strategy sub-theme. These ideas were primarily high-level and overarching in their scope, meaning they represent the overall goals that the arts and culture sector should have, as well as some of the systems that exist to facilitate these goals.

Some participants felt that the arts and culture sector need to reach a “critical mass” to be effective. This means that once enough artists work in proximity, they’ll benefit from each other’s expertise. It can also mean they have greater collective bargaining power. This idea of critical mass was also termed as an “economy of scale”, which is where for one artist working alone it is more costly to do work, but for one hundred artists it becomes cheaper. These two ideas lead into the perceived need to map out Birmingham’s assets in terms of resources and people, which was mentioned by a few participants. They felt that creating a clear map of the city’s assets would help in understanding the city and would aid in identifying areas that need more attention. It was also felt that working with other global cities would be beneficial and that this approach may help reach the aforementioned “economy of scale”. This may lead to the creation of a “stronger arts ecosystem”, which is how one participant termed what he would like to see.

To use this arts ecosystem for people’s benefit, it was felt that discerning “access points” for culture was important, which are places that different people with different intersectional characteristics could interact with culture. For example, a single, black, able bodied, working-class mother would have different opportunities to interact with arts and culture than a retired, white, male, middle-class man with arthritis. Understanding when, where, and how different groups can potentially interact with arts and culture was seen as important for creating the opportunity for them to do so. This idea was primarily mentioned in sessions on motherhood and older adults. It was felt that only by understanding people’s routines can they be included in the city’s offerings.

Take Risks

The idea of taking risks was a theme in some sessions. Some groups felt that the council’s approach to the arts sector is rooted in conservatism. They felt a lack of risk-taking has undermined the arts and culture sector. An idea that exemplified this was several people comparing Birmingham to

Manchester. It was felt that Manchester not only took a risk in the 1980s, but they also had the drive and ambition to change their direction, which has since benefitted that city.

This idea of inherent conservatism within the council and the arts and culture sector was raised in other ways. One group believed that democratising the arts and culture sector (arts & international affairs, 2020; mass-creative, 2017), along with the resources that sustain it would be beneficial. Additionally, one participant suggested that curators in residence reflect populism, which is contrary to the idea of democratising this space. There was also a feeling from some participants that there is gatekeeping at almost all levels, which is inhibiting people from being creative; the idea of gatekeepers was brought up primarily in relation to schools, community centres, and The Arts Council, all of which have the power to facilitate or halt someone's ideas of expression.

Branding and Identity

This sub-theme was organised around the idea that Birmingham lacks a strong identity. For some, it was felt that the city is not capitalising on its unique history and on the specific way it has conceptualised arts and culture today. There was a feeling that culture is what sets cities apart from each other and that Birmingham is trying to copy a more generalised idea of what culture is supposed to be. This sentiment was best captured by the following statements:

"Globalisation is a homogenising force, so to make Birmingham stand out, we need to tap into that creativity."

"Culture is something that draws people to places. It has the power of attraction."

These quotes link to what another participant said about shaping arts and culture within the city. To be a representation of Birmingham, it needs to come from Birmingham.

"It is better to identify what the city already has as opposed to shaping it through external methods."

There was a feeling that Birmingham has a strong industrial heritage, but the city is not leveraging it. One participant thought that the city was ashamed of its industrial heritage, whereas it should be proud of it. This linked with Birmingham's use of its canal system, which is a relic of industrialisation; there was a feeling that it could be better used to attract more people to the city.

These ideas also link to the fact that many people thought negatively that Birmingham is copying London. However, the idea that Birmingham should follow Manchester's example was apparent. Many people compared the two cities in terms of success.

Nurture Talent

This sub-theme was borne out of many participants feeling that nurturing the city's talent was crucial. It was discussed how people are often forced to leave the city to follow a career in the arts and culture sector; some felt that this is exacerbated by a lack of infrastructure that would keep people in the city and a lack of investment in the city's creatives. Many people wanted Birmingham to nurture and invest in its own talent and to be a city that supports citizen art. This idea would

naturally link with the sub-theme branding/identity because it has the potential to create something unique for the city.

To nurture talent means creating a space for people to grow within the city. This links to numerous other sub-themes (Education and Careers) with ideas like supporting school children exploring arts and creativity, to creating a clear career pathway for people. It was felt by many participants that there is a lack of access to arts in schools, with one participant giving an example of arts classrooms being repurposed to teach maths. In the session on music, the participants felt that there is a lack of jobs between the most basic in the sector and the more advanced. Essentially, they felt that there are rungs missing on the career ladder, which they stated as being at least partly responsible for creatives leaving the city.

A proposal from one participant was that nurturing the city's music scene could be achieved via taking the steps necessary to become a UNESCO city of Music (Cities of Music Network, 2022). The aim of this is the use of the creative sector in sustainable urban development, which should benefit the city's talent and infrastructure. The same principles could easily be applied the wider arts sector too through the UNESCO Creative Cities initiative (which was not discussed in the sessions). As stated by UNESCO (2020) "The 246 cities which currently make up this network [creative cities] work towards a common objective: placing the creativity and cultural industries at the heart of their development plans at the local level and cooperating actively at the international level". This idea fits neatly into answering many of the ideas raised throughout this engagement process.

The Council as a Facilitator

This sub-theme is centred around the perception of the council's future role in the arts and culture sector. Although participants linked the council's role with funding, many also believe the council needs to act as a broker to open doors for creatives and organisations. The council was most often described as an organisation that needed to help to negotiate with businesses on behalf of the arts and culture sector and to facilitate connections between different cultural groups. Broadly, it was felt that old models of council funding are losing their functionality. The participants felt that the council can no longer act as the primary funder for the arts and culture due to funding cuts, which leads to the necessity of diversification of funding streams.

Systems Reform

Systems reform was the sub-theme under which many participants' thoughts and ideas fell. Several participants made comments about the complexity of the language and the processes in the arts and culture sector, especially around grants applications. This was coupled with the belief that the levels of governance and legality were burdensome and thus act as a barrier for some people. This is an issue of informational literacy, whereby those who are better educated are more able to grasp the systems that have been put in place and navigate them to achieve their goals. In contrast, for people who do not have a university education nor experience in such systems, they can act as a significant barrier. This then becomes a problem of social justice where some people are advantaged by systems and others disadvantaged, despite everyone working to the same systems.

Informational literacy is also linked to the use of language within the arts and culture sector. This was discussed from two angles. Firstly, in a city with over 100 languages, English is almost exclusively used to communicate in the written form. Secondly, the complexity of language within the sector and within the grant application process acts as a barrier as described by the following quote:

"... problem of alien language in application forms and in the visual arts generally"

Participants at the Cotteridge session discussed the difference between art and vandalism. These artists frequently involved themselves with producing art in public spaces. They and others engaged in similar artistic endeavours often avoid council processes when doing things in the community due to the systems being difficult to navigate, which raises the question of whether the council processes are fit for purpose. Instead, they sought acceptance from the communities they worked with to justify their work, because without council permission, they may be seen as vandals. This led to the following question:

“What is art and what is vandalism?”

There was also a broad feeling that a stronger arts ecosystem needs to be established in the city. The idea of arts and culture being embedded¹ in the city’s processes was discussed. To achieve this, some felt that strong narratives² need to be created for the city. However, several participants felt that the infrastructure for this remains missing in the city.

¹ The definition of embedding arts and culture in the city was not fully explored in the sessions. However, from various comments, it can be seen as incorporating not just creative approaches to problems, but also considering the affect that changes and developments will have on the city’s reputation and appearance. Arts and culture can be represented within, but not limited to, the field of public health, social justice, the methods the council uses to communicate with the public, and the built environment.

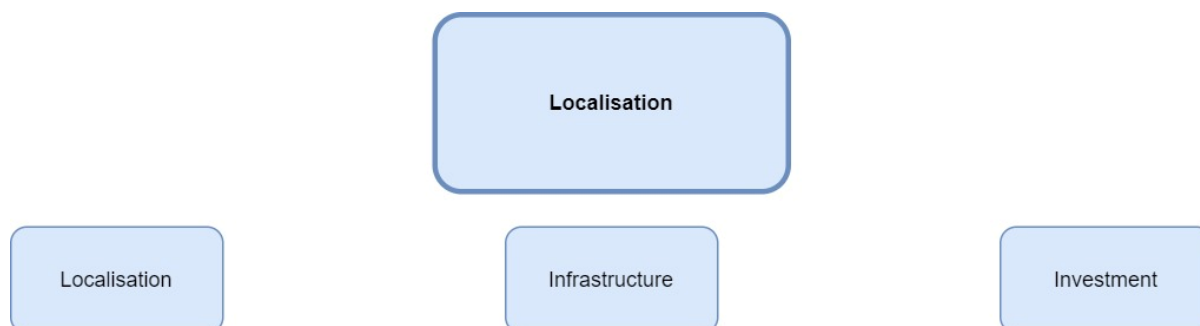
² A strong narrative is one which provides a direction for people to follow. Without a strong narrative, a community often pulls in many different directions as groups pursue their own agendas.

3.2.2 Localisation

Localisation represents the desire to see a more decentralised approach to culture in the city supported by changes in infrastructure and by investment. The localisation sub-theme represents the dislike, presented by most participants, that the majority of the cultural offerings in the city take place in the city centre. There was a strong feeling that arts and culture should be accessible in communities. This links to the idea of democratisation of arts and culture, where people have more control over its development. A visual representation of this theme can be seen in figure 3.

Figure 3

Infrastructure and its sub-themes



Localisation

The ideas that form this theme were frequently repeated in sessions. Participants discussed how not everyone in the city comes into the city centre, which leaves people out of the city's cultural offering due to centralisation. Participants felt this was further compounded by the cost-of-living crisis making it harder for people to travel. Others felt that people should be able to enjoy arts and culture within their communities, which links to the inclusivity theme.

Decentralisation of arts and culture was also seen as a method to support citizens. It was felt that the arts can help with physical and mental health, so it is important to make these services readily available to people on their doorstep. This was raised in the session on older adults as a means of supporting people, who have complex challenges, whilst also allowing communities to express themselves. This aspect of localisation of arts and culture links to health and wellbeing.

Another benefit of spreading culture around the city not only makes it more accessible, but it might make people feel comfortable expressing themselves in ways that would not happen if it were concentrated, which links to both democratisation and decolonisation³ of the arts. Overall, the following quote best captures the feelings around decentralisation:

"Birmingham should be focused around being a city of centres and not the city centre"

Infrastructure

One issue that was raised multiple times and which has links across themes is transport. Many participants felt that the city's transport system needs improvement, and some felt it was, at times, unsafe, especially at night. Additionally, although one participant felt that the links to the city centre were good, he felt that travelling horizontally across the city was difficult. This could create a problem for the localisation of arts and culture because it means people will struggle to travel to different parts of the city to engage with arts and culture without changes to public transport. Also linked to transport was the lack of park and ride schemes and the use of prime real estate for cars.

³ Decolonisation of the arts is a complex field that centres around privilege. This privilege is the ability of some actors to have their voices and beliefs heard, whilst others are ignored. It is a concept more complex than mere diversity, it is based around fighting hierarchies and inequalities, which clearly links to age, gender, ethnicity, and social class. Understanding how stories are told and who tells them is a fundamental part of decolonisation. This is just brief description that does not do justice to the complex nature of the process.

The issue of space was raised many times. It was felt that there is not enough workspace for artists that is priced affordably. This links with the gentrification of Digbeth, which was brought up in the meetings as an issue because creatives felt that there are few options for them. This problem of space also relates to the space to exhibit work, which itself links to the issue of decentralisation because if arts and culture are going to be spread more equally around the city, then there need to be places with legitimacy that allow artists to exhibit or sell their work.

It was not only space for creatives that was discussed in the sessions. It was felt that youth clubs/centres, church halls, scout halls have been shut, all of which are one of the first places that people learn to be creative. This issue was linked with safety because many people felt that these places keep children and young adults off the streets. Because they are where people learn to be creative this idea links with nurture, careers, training, and education. Essentially, it is another missing rung in the career ladder.

Lastly, one person talked about the 15-minute city model, which Birmingham has adopted. This principle, which sees shops, cafes, and work all within 15-20 minutes of a person who is walking or cycling, would be beneficial to the arts and culture sector if it were embedded in the model, which links with localisation of arts and culture, people's health, and the concept of a city of centres.

Investment

The sessions demonstrated that there are various issues and ideas related to funding. Some people felt they needed help through additional funding, which was demonstrated by views that there should either be discounts for creatives when they are setting themselves up, or that the council should subsidize community space for them to operate from. This was also seen as a move that could lead to new cultural quarters, which links to achieving critical mass to strengthen the arts ecosystems whilst also supporting the ideas of localisation and democratisation of the arts. Several groups thought diversification of funding would lead to better support for grass-roots organisations, and this would have a greater impact than large funding for fewer organisations.

Many people felt that there needed to be changes to funding. Some believed the council should use its position to encourage organisations over which it has influence to invest in communities. Others felt that funding should be diversified because it was believed that no one organisation could do everything. This links to the problem of gatekeeping, which could be made worse by only funding to a few groups. Lastly, the way funding currently works is perceived by some to force people to work in silos, which goes against what many participants wanted, which was greater cross-cultural communication, removal of silos within arts and culture and the city generally.

Some participants raised other issues around investment and funding. Firstly, schools are less well equipped to act as community hubs because they are often forced into a position of acting as a business by renting out their spaces to generate additional revenue, which removes this as space available to communities. Secondly, it was felt that there should be investment in grass-roots activities and recognition of said activities, which links to the previous idea of a few organisations not being able to do everything for everyone. Thirdly, making the city more attractive to creative businesses was seen as important. Lastly, many participants acknowledged that new ways of funding the arts was needed because the council is no longer able to be the sole provider.

3.2.3 Learning

This theme encompassed ideas linked to young people, education, careers, and training. These were often viewed as important if the city was to take the next steps in building itself up as a cultural centre. A visual representation of this theme can be seen in figure 4.

Figure 4

Learning and its sub-themes



Education

This sub-theme was primarily orientated around the disappointment of arts and creative pursuits being cut from school curriculums in favour of STEM subjects. Participants believed the first stage in reinvigorating this sector would be at schools because it is important to reach out to people's minds and create an image of what arts and culture can be.

One participant from the music session thought that schools do not equip their students to understand creative industries, nor is the sign posting there to understand what the next steps might be in a music career. It was stated that:

"Children don't realise that arts are an option for them because there is a lack of information in the education system"

Training

The lack of training options in the city was viewed as a barrier not only for people to develop careers but also for the city to nurture its own talent. For some, the university option of developing skills can be seen as out of reach, which is why training courses are important. They allow people who are often from lower socio-economic positions to develop skills. However, the creation of training schemes would only work if there were sufficient engagement with communities such that those who would benefit would be able to find out about them. This perceived deficit of training for homegrown talent also has links to the lack of identity in Birmingham's arts and culture scene because these voices and ideas are missing.

This lack of training not only affects those starting out, but it also affects organisations and people who are already developed. One participant stated that there is nowhere in the city to access CPD, for example. Training could also help organisations access funds.

Careers

Building on education and training is careers. This sub-theme was mainly focused on a perceived lack of viable options in the city which forces many aspiring artists and musicians to leave. One participant described this as “missing rungs on [the career] ladder”. There was general agreement that the city needed clear career pathways for people to follow. The general belief that the city needed more jobs in the arts and culture sector was seen many times. Interestingly, it was people who were developed in the sector that made these observations.

3.2.4 Wellbeing

This theme was organised around age and health. However, some aspect of age would also fit within inclusivity and other aspects under wellbeing due to the focus on younger and older people. A visual representation of this theme can be seen in figure 5.

Figure 5

Infrastructure and its sub-themes



Age

This sub-theme was primarily around young people, though the session on older adults also raised issues. There was a strong and repeated feeling that young people should be empowered and included in debates and decision making. It was clear from people’s comments that young people were perceived to be left out from important processes that affect them. For older adults, ideas were linked to cultural background, health, fear of covid, the ability to access cultural and artistic activities close to home, and the difficulty of advertising events for a generation that is typically less technologically aware.

Health

This sub-theme came through in some sessions but not others. It was recognised that arts and creativity can be pivotal in both physical and mental health, through dance or social activities. The health benefits of arts and culture were also tied to social prescribing, though comments were raised about the ease of successful social prescribing due to the difficulty in finding and funding providers

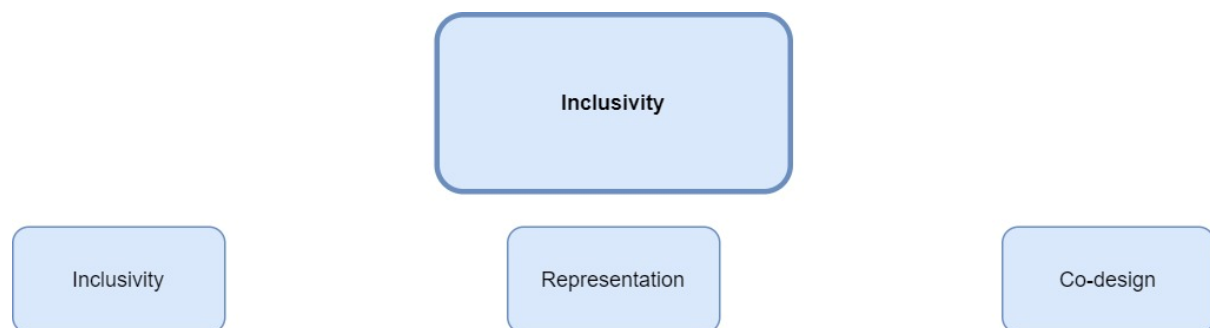
of activities. Lastly, in terms of disabilities, the issue and importance of invisible disabilities was raised.

3.2.5 Inclusivity

This was one of the most powerful themes. The idea of inclusion being important was heard in every session, which suggests it may be lacking. This theme was centred around the idea that people who are in control of their lives, people who have more agency⁴ are generally healthier and happier (Fuller et al., 1980; Marmot et al., 1991). A visual representation of this theme can be seen in figure 6.

Figure 6

Inclusivity



Inclusivity

Participants felt that the council should engage more with communities. They felt it was important to be involved in the decision-making processes that affect them, which clearly links to empowering communities. Furthermore, respondents stated that they wanted the council to break down barriers between the city's culture, in a culturally appropriate manner. Many of the participants wanted the opportunity to work cross-culturally with people. They felt that there was value in this, which also links to the idea of creating an identity for Birmingham

The inclusivity theme also saw discussions about both race and social class. It was felt that traditionally white spaces are still difficult for other people to inhabit. This idea of privileged space is also continued with some people discussing how Birmingham's art is aimed at certain socio-economic groups via opera, ballet, and the orchestra. This was taken further by others, who felt that there is a tension between working class and middle-class art.

An issue with engaging ethnic minorities in arts and culture was based around a lack of representation. Many participants from ethnic minorities stated that they did not see themselves in the city's cultural offer. This lack of representation is a reason for avoidance of some of the city's events. This was taken further by participants in one session as they questioned how the city deals with the actions of colonialism. Although these actions are based in the past, their effects are still felt. These participants discussed museums, and they perceived this lack of accountability in where and how the exhibits were collected. Lastly, this linked to a desire to see a decolonisation (Kunstskritikk, 2020) of the arts sector.

⁴ Agency is a term used to describe people's ability to fulfil their potential despite being constrained by social constructs such as class, culture, age, sexuality, and education amongst others. People who have agency typically have a better education and inhabit a socially privileged space, which gives them more control over their daily lives.

It was also felt that arts and culture in the city should better represent the demographics in the city. Participants wanted the ability to control their own narratives, and they felt it was important to leverage other ways of knowing and seeing the world. This was also linked to language. This was discussed from the viewpoint that there are over 100 languages spoken in the city, which should be better represented in the arts because language is a form of identity. However, discussions around language also ran into the unnecessarily complex use of the English language, which acts as a barrier for many, especially those without high information literacy or whose first language is not English. This second form of language has clear links to the systems reform sub-theme.

An idea that came out of the sessions that sits within the nurture and inclusivity sub-themes, is that people are inspired by those who share their attributes. This was raised in both a general World Café session and an online session, which focused on people with disabilities. The effect of seeing someone who shares your attributes exhibiting art was described as profound. This is clearly something that should be accounted for when motivating the next generation of talent.

The session on motherhood focused on the importance of schools to mothers and their strategic position in communities. Schools generally sit at an important nexus both physically and socially within our lives. However, this is not only true for students, but also for mothers (parents). It was recognised that schools could be a focal point for mothers, especially those who are single parents or isolated. Furthermore, it was acknowledged that not only do mothers have a different rhythm to their lives than other citizens, but also cultural differences can change these rhythms and should be accounted for when engaging with different groups. Engaging this group would require an understanding of their access points to arts and culture, which would be based upon the rhythms of their days. Finally, there were several comments that linked motherhood to isolation and depression, which underlines the importance of including this group in the city's cultural offer.

Representation

Although the number of different comments were few, the idea of better representation for local communities and ethnic groups was a common theme in the sessions. People frequently said that they wanted a voice, and they wanted to be included in decisions that affected them. This was seen as especially pertinent for both under-represented communities and young people.

Co-production/design

Co-production and co-design were raised several times during sessions. These are ideas that are linked to decentralisation of power and enabling people by giving them power over the decisions that affect their lives.

It was recognised that the public and private sectors work differently, and only by bridging that gap can a strategic partnership be made. However, a funder and funded relationship has the potential to lead gatekeeping because of the disparity in power. Despite this, due to the lack of centralised government funding, it was perceived that new models of supporting arts and culture are needed. From the point of view of many of those who attended the sessions, it was felt that the responsibility for creating funding methods sits with the City Council.

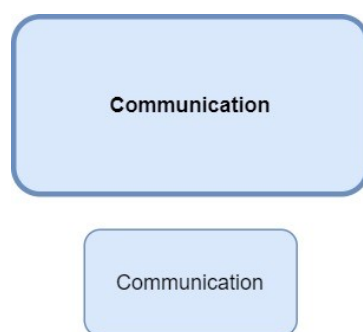
There was also a strong feeling that arts and culture should be done with communities and not to them. This reflects the many comments about involving communities in decisions which affect them.

3.2.6 Communications and Engagement

Repeated in almost every session was the feeling that there is no way to easily navigate arts and culture within Birmingham. There is no central resource, and even people within the scene are often not aware of everything that is happening. This strengthens the perception that so many people, groups, and organisations work in silos. There were also sub-themes around the city's brand and identity and people's ability to represent themselves. A visual representation of this theme can be seen in figure 7.

Figure 7

Communication & Engagement and its sub-themes



Communication

There was not a unified idea as to how communication about the arts scene should proceed. This disagreement was broadly linked to age. Younger participants who were more engaged with social media thought that better use of such platforms should be pursued. However, older participants looked to a more basic approach to communicating what is happening, such as on buses or in post offices. This suggests a mixed approach should be used, but the different approaches need improving to reach people.

Participants felt that there was no central place to advertise the city's events. They felt that without a central place, people have difficulty in finding out what is on in the city, and organisers are not able to effectively advertise their events. This builds upon the lack of a tourist information centre, which could act as a physical destination with its own website that could act as a centralised informational source. Furthermore, in a city that desires greater localisation of arts and culture, achieving a clear way to communicate the city's cultural offer will be critical to success. Lastly, in one session, there was a comment that Birmingham City Council communicates more effectively with the cultural sector than with the public.

3.3 Twitter Results

To drive engagement through Twitter, the questions asked were varied. Three of the questions were of a more general tone about arts and culture in the city, and three of the questions were specifically aimed at providing material for the statement of intent.

When asked what is unique to Birmingham, there were various answers. Most popular was the fact that it is the home of heavy metal, which was discussed 13 times. However, for some, there was a slight feeling that this should not be openly talked about or that it should be celebrated it more. Following heavy metal, five comments focused on the diversity of the city. Although recognised for its diversity, people also felt that there are issues around social equity within Birmingham. Lastly, Digbeth, green spaces in the city, and a specific festival were also recognised. There were 15 more individual comments that raised specific aspects of the city, but only two of them (street art and the canals) had been mentioned previously. The other answers referred to historical events, a specific author, a singer/songwriter, buildings, humour, and specific events to name a few.

A question about what opportunities Birmingham is missing revealed several ideas. Art was the most commonly mentioned issue with three people discussing the lack of nationally recognised art galleries and museum and two people also discussed the lack of an art festival, which has been mentioned previously in other areas of this engagement process. Heavy metal music was mentioned by three people, with homeofmetaluk being discussed. There was a desire to see outdoor markets from one participant to which two further people highlighted some of the arts markets that already happen in Birmingham. This may echo the difficulty of discovering what is happening in Birmingham. Lastly, two comments suggested that Birmingham is missing out on the benefits of its diversity, where one person questioned whether such communities are being reached and another whether various cultures are able to celebrate themselves. Other comments mentioned ideas previously seen in other engagement events: gatekeeping, career pathways, and the city centric approach to art and culture.

Twitter users thought that support for the arts and culture sector needed to be aimed at eight different areas. The most popular choice was supporting new artists, small organisations and freelancers. It was suggested that this support be organised around education, career, access, and in people sharing their culture with the city, which are ideas seen in our previous engagement events. Additionally, better networking opportunities for creatives were mentioned, which links to support. Other comments focused on previously discussed ideas: funding, art in communities, more events, and better access to art via schools, community centres, and youth clubs.

3.4 Be Heard Survey Results

Empowerment of communities was amongst the questions asked in the Be Heard Survey. The results show that 52% of respondents felt empowered to share their own community's arts and culture more widely in Birmingham. The question as to how this can be improved showed significant variability. Common barriers identified included the inability to effectively promote events and the lack of space in the city, which various people nuanced as to how that acts as a barrier. Additionally, funding for communities to share their culture and celebrate their successes was clear. Responses also suggest there is a need for better communication with communities.

"Advertise opportunities via differing methods. From local community to City events, word of mouth, printed posters through to advertising on the web"

"Celebrate micro scale local achievements by diverse community members -not all macro personalities and successes"

*"It [Birmingham] can help provide studio workshops for artists.
It [Birmingham] can develop more physical spaces where arts are created and shown"*

Two of these responses mirrored those from the engagement sessions; the respondents felt that the opportunities for creative work in Birmingham are insufficient, so some people leave the city, which means they do not share their art locally.

Responses to the question regarding ease of access to information or arts and culture in Birmingham showed that over half of the responses found this difficult to do. However, answers ranged from extremely easy to not easy. When asked what the barriers were, many people discussed poor promotion of events, the lack of a central community hub within the city, digital poverty, and insufficient transport. These are common threads through both the survey and the engagement events. Two interesting responses linked to promotion were:

"A few weeks ago, walking around New York - the city had regular signs reminding people of a little hidden coffee shop, a gallery, a venue, that you might have missed"

"I arrive at new street station, there is generally nothing that connects visitors with what is happening around the city"

Some responses were linked to safety issues with transport, as demonstrated by the following quote:

"Public transport in/ out of the city is difficult later at night when most shows finish which causes me safety concerns"

Additionally, responses were linked to digital poverty and a lack of internet skills that would help to navigate, what has previously been described as, a difficult online space to find out what is happening in the city:

"Knowing where to look. It's not easy for people without online skills"

The responses around the council's roles in culture, arts, and creativity were broadly similar to the answers regarding empowerment. There was a strong feeling (with almost 91% of respondents stating) that the council is not currently doing enough to promote or champion culture, arts, and creativity in communities. These feelings are demonstrated by the following quotes:

"To reflect the racial and ethnic composition of all citizens of Birmingham fairly and positively by focussing on areas of common ground - sharing food, music and culture and avoiding areas of conflict ie religion and politics"

"... the promotion and championing of arts and culture is not inclusive. Many major communities are excluded"

"there's not enough encouragement of presenting yourself and who you are culturally"

Both funding and space were again mentioned when discussing the council's role in culture, arts, and creativity:

"Funding arts projects and festivals in schools and local communities"

"When was the Council last involved in adding to the stock of cultural spaces. The cultural economy is not wide enough in Birmingham so young people go elsewhere for work and people don't come to Birmingham for its culture. Look at Manchester to see how they have used culture as a form of regeneration"

The last response links to people's experiences of either needing to leave the city to find work or having seen friends and colleagues leave the city to look for work. This issue is repeated in both the Be Heard Surveys and the engagement events.

Finally, the link between funding and outcomes of funding provided a space for diverse answers; however, the following two quotes best summarise them:

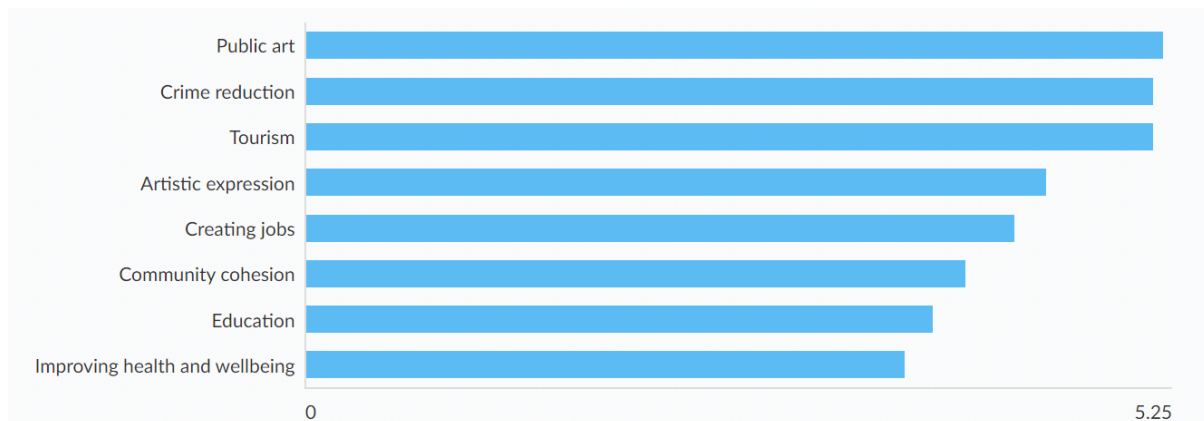
"Civic Pride. Art is normally brought in. By using more and growing more local artists and cultural expression we build ownership of our spaces and cities"

"Events that encourage community cohesion. I feel that the communities in Birmingham are not engaged with each other and there needs to more of a feeling of pride in being a Brummie"

In the Be Heard Survey, one question focused on the importance of investment and the outcomes of said investment. Figure 7 displays what outcomes respondents thought were more important, where a higher number is seen as more important, with eight being the largest possible number. Interestingly, crime reduction is one of the most important areas, which given the frequency that 'safety' was voiced, maybe should not be that surprising.

Figure 8

How respondents ranked outcomes of arts and culture investment



When asked for people's thoughts on the future of Birmingham, the responses were varied. However, some ideas were repeated more frequently than others. One respondent envisioned a colourful city where all cultures would have space to express themselves, which links with public art and the ability to be proud of Birmingham's diversity. Additionally, they wanted to see trees and wildlife in the city. Another respondent also commented on green space when they compared Birmingham to Madrid and New York:

"Spaces for acoustic players, spaces for chess players, like in New York, spaces where people can pause to think under leafy canopies, like Madrid, there are endless possibilities and small ways to make this city better"

Another issue that came up was the use of outdoor space to facilitate events. It was felt that there are places and even stages to do this, but no one is taking advantage of them:

"There should be more attractive permanent, supervised outdoor areas in each postcode area where events can take place"

There was also a feeling that arts should be brought into the open, which link with other ideas of inclusivity, representation, and infrastructure.

"Art in the open and not hidden in expensive theatres, that can only be accessed by the well off. Use libraries and parks for theatrical events"

"Known as a city with easy access to creativity, arts and culture and actively promoted to engage a wide range of communities"

"Use the cultures and the heritage of city to encourage those that wouldn't normally try things to have a go"

Additionally, concepts such as space, accessibility, affordability, and diversity were represented and echo what has been heard throughout the engagement process. Lastly, one respondent had the following two ideas, which naturally link to creating a broader, inclusive arts scene because it allows people to find something they like and to access non-traditional spaces, in which they may feel they belong.

“Open to all - give the message of encouragement – Tasters.

Not in the fixed box of theatre, film, art class, sculpture etc - go outside the box”

When asked about job opportunities for creatives in the city, 56% said that the city has good job opportunities. However, when reading the comments, the majority of the comments were lukewarm about the sector. There were only a few positive comments, and more negative comments counterbalancing them. Interestingly, of the people who answered the question, 57% did not work or study in the culture or arts sector, and of those who gave strong positive or negative responses, only 25% worked in the arts and culture sector. Below are three comments, representing a negative, neutral, and positive view:

“I can count the paid jobs I've had in the city, in the past 6 years, on one hand.

*I am **constantly** told that my work in Birmingham is loved and appreciated, but no one wants to pay for it”*

“It offers good opportunities to one off events but nothing long term”

“Many venues/organisations based locally to work for or with”

Asked about how the city can better support the creative sector, many of the responses echoed what has come previously. Some of the new ideas revolved around funding, job security for creatives, better signposting of opportunities, and better support for SME development. The core ideas of funding, space, a creative/information hub, and a better network in the city were repeated. One comment that links to embedding arts, culture, and creativity in all aspects of the city's processes was:

“Learn about the asset that a creative city offers to so many other agendas”

In addition to ideas that became evident in responses to specific questions, there were also ideas that could be discerned by looking at response from different questions.

The desire to see an environment which encourages arts and creativity because this would create jobs and careers in the sector, was evident. Another respondent thought that the city needed a creative quarter, which is somewhere people would come to the city to visit. This would potentially lead to the realisation of a positive environment for arts and creativity, which may be enabled by the

ideas another respondent gave that the city needs sustainable and low-cost ways that people can perform in every area of the city. There was a specific reference to more low-cost events rather than “big, splashy ones”.

Inclusion and the diversity in Birmingham were also seen in the Be Heard Survey. Respondents wanted to see the diversity of the city reflected in the cultural offer. This was also reflected in the belief that the council should invite various community groups to lead in arranging events, in which the council could match funding for these events. This has the potential to facilitate another point which was that community cohesion should be encouraged with the aim of strengthening pride in the city.

Several of the participants were also champions of street art in the city. The general feeling was that the street art scene is not well integrated into Birmingham’s cultural offer. To facilitate this, some responses suggested that street art should be adopted as a contemporary art movement, especially as the city is widely recognised for its graffiti, and there were feelings that there should be a modern street art museum and award(s) for excellence in street art that should be linked to institutions such as the Hippodrome, High Vis Fest, and the Custard Factory.

3.5 Pre-mortem Results

A pre-mortem exercise is one where people visualise that the intended outcome has not been achieved, and in fact, it has been a disaster. Then the participants try to understand what might have gone wrong and how it could be prevented.

There were two sessions organised for this exercise. However, due to lack of attendance, only one session was completed, in which there were five participants.

Pre-Mortem Themes

Four themes were identified from the pre-mortem sessions. These themes were created from ideas written on post-it-notes that participants wrote.

Resources and Funding

There were 11 post-it-notes under the theme of resources and funding. Five of these notes focused on funding. These notes emphasised a lack of resources for the sector, investment into community projects, the way funding works, and the fact that if ambition and funding do not match each other, the outcome will not match the desire. There were three post it notes that fell under prioritisation. These emphasised the culture sector as not being seen as a priority, inappropriate use of space to facilitate a vibrant cultural sector, and over-emphasis on competing priorities, such as STEM. There was one note about taxes, which questioned whether businesses were paying enough, and if that was being invested into communities. Another not focused on the future shape of the economy as a threat to the success of the arts and culture sector. Lastly, there was a note questioning whether the sector was sustainable, which implicitly suggests the writer thought that it is not.

Ambition and Vision

This theme contained ten post-it-notes. There were four notes that clustered around vision. These notes emphasised a lack of vision, extending vision into higher education / prioritisation of STEM, not looking up and out beyond the city, and not recognising Birmingham’s cultural assets and partnerships. These ideas suggest that the participants thought a clear vision to be important to the culture sector. There were two notes around leadership, which revolved around a lack of leadership

and how to make a sector that some may view poorly in economic terms succeed. The ideas of vision and leadership seem to naturally link together.

The remaining four notes each focused on one idea each. There was a note about the city not taking enough risks, which reflects the theme first found in the initial engagement events. The next idea was a lack of collaboration and partnerships being a potential cause of failure for the sector. One note suggested a disconnect between various stakeholders could be an issue. This disconnect could be about the direction of travel, priorities, or funding, for example. Lastly, one note focused on the difficulty of making the next strategy a success as a potential threat.

Inclusion an Opportunity

This theme contained six post-it-notes. Two notes were related to employment, where one focused on culturally appropriate employment and the other on employment across socio-economic strata. Three notes focused on inclusion: one related to closed conversations and a lack of transparency, another was about the city not being diverse and inclusive enough, and the remaining one was about creating opportunities despite division in the community / sector. The last note focused on the lack of opportunity to develop talent in schools, which relates to the focus of many schools. It was interesting to note that this theme was deemed less important than in the other types of engagement events. However, the last theme is closely linked to inclusivity.

Engagement

This theme was comprised of four post-it-notes. They were all about engagement, including co-design, definition of ambition, and not taking account of residents wants and needs.

This theme follows a similar line to the previous theme. It suggests that people in the city want to be involved in conversations that affect them. They want their voices to be heard, and they feel that this is not currently happening. It is possible if this continues, there may be a lack of public support for the next strategy. Given that strategy will be in place for ten years, this could be problematic.

Pre-empting issues

The next part of the session focused on how to address the threats that were identified to the success of the next cultural strategy. Two themes were chosen to be the focus of this part.

Pre-empting Resources and Funding

There were four comments here. The first was about the way the ability of the city council to influence government priorities. Without central government support, the view was that the arts and culture sector would be under threat. The next comment focused on decentralisation of the economy around the arts and culture sector. It was viewed that music and films are huge industries, and if they could somehow be influenced to support other areas of arts and culture, it could provide a huge boost to not just city-wide projects, but UK wide projects. The next comment focused on the importance of creating jobs for fresh graduates, without which there is likely to be a talent drain from the city.

Pre-empting Ambition and Vision

The idea of incorporating consultation into the vision of the city was an important answer to the problems raised. Co-creation of any vision that affects the people of the city was repeated by the participants; they wanted to see engagement with invisible populations to reach a widely agreed consensus. There was also a desire to see greater collaboration, both internally with stakeholders in the city, and with European cities so we can learn other ways of approaching the problems we face.

In fact, one of the ideas was about working with charity projects, which could be extended to NGOs. This idea of collaboration was extended by one participant suggesting that the city needs international arts festival, such as Manifesta to be held in the city. The last idea linked to these was that the city's stakeholders should make a shared pledge to achieve whatever vision is chosen. It was hoped that various types of engagement would lead to a widely agreed vision for the city.

There was another idea that suggested that there needs to be a change of narrative in the city. This reflects many aspects of the initial engagement process. How the narrative needs to change often depends on who is asked. In this instance, the participant was focusing on the importance associated with arts and culture in society in comparison to other activities, such as banking, science and technology, and law. If arts and culture are not widely appreciated as beneficial and valued, the people who work in the sector may always struggle. This was linked embedding arts and culture in all processes.

The last three ideas were unrelated. There was a desire to see better funding for museum(s) and the library in the city and to see art and cultural spaces branching out into other settings, such as hospitals. Additionally, following this idea was a desire to see arts for the young and old, especially for people in care homes. Lastly, there was a feeling that the city's canal network could be leveraged more.

4 Discussion

The results of the first section came from the World Café and Mentimeter sessions. These sessions demonstrated the importance of inclusion, from which it can be inferred that, for some, Birmingham needs to work at being a more inclusive city. People felt that culture in Birmingham should be linked to the demographics of the city. Given that this city is almost unique in its demographics, this may require bringing more residents into the conversation, which could be achieved via the process of localisation. This process was linked to a move away from a city centric model of culture to a city of centres model of culture because participants felt it important to access arts and culture in their localities. This could give people unparalleled access to culture, and it would allow them to express themselves in their own communities. To realise this would require the creation of space for creatives to operate from, which is currently seen as a significant problem and a barrier for creatives. Additionally, this could possibly lead to the creation of creative quarters for the city. However, this space does not need to be limited to workplaces; it could also be schools, scout huts, and churches, which are already in communities.

Localisation of art and culture could lead to additional outcomes. Firstly, it becomes easier to include residents who are less able to travel by creating opportunities on their doorsteps. This could lead to improved wellbeing through increased activity, a closer community, and more support. It may also create jobs throughout the city in support of localised culture, and it allows for training courses to be hosted in deprived areas. Furthermore, it creates a natural channel through which people can represent themselves and their communities but only if power is sufficiently devolved to them to do so.

The process of localisation has the power to address the issue of the city's identity. Many people felt that the city lacks a true identity, and they felt that it was through culture that we create identity. By localising arts and culture to many places in the city, it could create more opportunities for people to pursue or become involved with the sector, and if done cross-culturally, it could create a unique blending of cultures that may lead to the branding and identity that some felt the city lacks.

The Twitter engagement showed those who participated viewed heavy metal and diversity as Birmingham's most unique characteristics. However, there was a feeling that neither of these things is being fully acknowledged, supported, or leveraged. This is linked to the branding and identity problems discussed in the World Café and Mentimeter sessions. Given that they are viewed as city wide traits (by those who Tweeted) that are not being supported, it may be that the central narrative of the city does not match its own history, which could be a part of the lack of citywide identity.

Birmingham's perceived lack of identity may be why several Twitter participants wanted to see more around the arts in the form of nationally recognised galleries, museums, and festivals. Furthermore, when asked what the city was missing, several people again discussed the lack of recognition of heavy metal in the city's past. Amongst other comments, diversity was also mentioned as something missing from the city's cultural offer.

To achieve sufficient inclusion that a (new) identity is formed for the city would require funding. Here, diversification of funding was seen as important. Some participants believed that funding many small events would have more impact than funding a few large events. In a localised model of culture, this would almost be a requisite for success as there would be so much more happening across the city, which could lead to improved representation of cultures and communities.

This localisation process may lead to what some participants termed – critical mass. These are places where new creative quarters may appear because of numerous creatives working in the same place. However, to facilitate these, it was felt that a simplification of council and stakeholder systems was needed. Currently, for example, grant writing is often such a complex process that it is seen as a barrier for people without high informational literacy. This barrier typically inhibits those from lower socio-economic positions from accessing funding or advice, which creates further disadvantage. Some participants gave examples of organisations that have simplified funding requirements to be as inclusive as possible.

It was felt that embedding arts and culture in all (council) systems was important. For example, this may need to happen in the transport system to facilitate the localisation of culture. Currently, the transport system is viewed by many participants as insufficient for their needs, and in fact, they see it as unsafe at night. It was stated that the transport system is organised around accessing the city centre, but it does not permit horizontal access around the city, which could stifle the success of localised events. Without the ability to influence transport, the localised model of culture may not work.

In almost every session and the Be Heard Surveys the problem of promoting events was discussed. People stated that they do not know what is happening in the city, and because there is no centralised resource, people struggle to adequately promote their events. In a localised, cultural city, this could become an even greater threat to a successful cultural scene. As such, addressing this is currently a significant barrier.

In support of Birmingham's cultural offer, Twitter participants felt that new artists, small organisation, and freelancers need more support. These groups have all been highlighted as needing further support in other areas of this engagement process. In fact, many of the themes, such as localisation, infrastructure, investment, systems reform, would all work to make it easier to be successful in Birmingham for creatives.

When creatives struggle to pursue their career, some decide to leave. This idea was apparent in the World Café sessions and the Be Heard Survey data. However, in the survey, it was noted that when

creatives do this, they take their ideas with them, which impoverishes the Birmingham scene. It was also noted that at times, Birmingham brings outside talent into the city, which is received badly by people in the sector who are trying to make a living. However, it was not clear if this was an isolated event or something that happens frequently.

Overall, the Be Heard Survey responses raised many of the same issues as seen in the World Café and Mentimeter sessions. Ideas such as a lack of affordable space, insufficient promotion of events, safety concerns, funding issues, and job opportunities leading to people leaving the city, safety of transport, and inclusivity, were all important concerns. However, there were also some new ideas.

The idea of digital poverty was raised for the first time in the Be Heard Survey. This is an important topic for inclusivity. It is possible that localisation of arts and culture may alleviate this to an extent if it were done in such a way that opportunities were created to learn missing skills.

There were several responses in the Be Heard Survey that raised issues around street art in the city. They suggested that there needed to be better recognition and support of this creative pursuit, especially because Birmingham is known as a city with outstanding street art. However, street art was an area only briefly discussed in the World Café, Mentimeter, and Twitter conversations.

One survey respondent raised the prospect of benchmarking Birmingham against other global cities in order to learn what makes them unique, beautiful, and successful. Learning from the methods other cities in the world use could be a way to add to the city's cultural stock.

The last point from the survey data was a strong view that the council is not championing art and culture in the city. Given the various contextualities that surround the ability of the council to do this, there would be significant benefit from clear communication from the council as to what it is trying to achieve within the arts and culture sector, whilst also ensuring similar communication from the other stakeholders in the city.

The pre-mortem session raised many of the same issues as previously seen, so the four themes created in the sessions were representations of these ideas.

The resources and funding theme showed an emphasis on funding and prioritisation of resources as pressing concerns, which is not to undermine the other ideas presented, which were sustainability, the current and future stability of the country's economy, and taxes. The three ways to pre-empt these perceived failures were greater government support, a decentralisation of the arts and culture economy, and the creation of jobs. However, each of these different routes is difficult, and it is unclear how the creation of more jobs would stop problems of funding and resources.

The 'ambition and vision' theme focused on vision and leadership. It was felt that the city does not take advantage of what it has and does not look far enough afield for new ideas and concepts to help it promote arts and culture. There was a perceived lack of leadership within the city and a perceived disconnect with stakeholders. These and more collaboration were thought of as possible reasons for the failure of the next cultural strategy. Lastly, there was an idea that the next strategy could be too difficult to deliver, which suggests that realistic goals are needed. In answer to these perceived reasons for failure, consultation, networking, and collaboration were seen as important, though due to the nature of such processes, it is hard to define their outcomes. It is possible that if effort and responsibility were to be spread across various organisations, more might be achieved. The problem of leadership was not clearly addressed by the ways to pre-empt the perceived issues, though strong leadership can be seen as facilitating beneficial collaborations. The problem of not taking risks was not addressed.

The results of the pre-mortem sessions echoed many of the results from the other forms of engagement. However, their perceived importance was different. Previously, ideas of inclusivity and engagement were seen as important, but in these sessions, they were viewed as less of a threat to a successful strategy than the resource and ambition themes. This could be due to the small number of people who took part in the pre-mortem sessions and their intersectional positions.

The ideas for preventing the predicted issues were raised as problems in the previous engagement events. It was only decentralisation of the creative economy that was new. However, this, as well as taxes and direct governmental support, fall outside of the direct remit of the council and other stakeholders in the city so are unlikely to be easy to leverage.

5 Conclusion

The theme that ran through the various engagement events was inclusivity. Several other themes supported seemed to implicitly support this goal. For example, participants felt that Birmingham's cultural offer should reflect the diversity of the city, which clearly links to an inclusive city. To facilitate this inclusivity, localisation of arts and culture is important, essentially placing culture on people's doorsteps. To make this a reality, there need to be changes in transport, infrastructure, and the way Birmingham's cultural offer is communicated to its residents and tourists, and the way that creatives are able to promote themselves. The sector would also benefit from new funding models to allow the necessary changes to happen. The remaining themes and sub-themes either support this process or will benefit from the process.

For the vision created by the participants of this engagement process to be realised, inclusivity needs to be placed at the centre of all decisions. The people of this city need to be given a voice to influence the decisions that are being made which impact upon them. From this, the decisions for the arts and culture sector will work for the people who engage with it.

The final statement of intent can be found in appendix 8.

6 Limitations

Many of the sessions were poorly attended, which reduced the number of voices captured. However, due to the number of sessions, which used different engagement methods, many voices were captured overall. The pre-mortem sessions were undermined by the small number of people who took part, which resulted in cancelling one session. Therefore, the people who were present had significant influence due to fewer competing voices. This resulted in biased data for that section of the work. Although the organisers of this work attempted to engage as widely as possible, not every conceivable group was successfully contacted.

7 Future Work

This report should be communicated to all the people who took part. A Be Heard Survey should be created based on the outcomes of this work to nuance and check for agreement with the results. The next Be Heard Survey should be open to all, but it should be specifically communicated to those who have already taken part. By doing this, they will understand how they shaped the direction of the work. The Seldom Heard Voice tenders can be used to understand if different communities agree with the results so far. This can be nuanced by community researchers administering a simplified Be Heard Surveys in busy parts of the city. Further engagement events can be completed both generally and with other groups to both provide feedback on this work and to capture people's thoughts on its outcomes. This additional information can form the basis of the next strategy.

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Appendix 1

Appendix one is a list of all the events that were held as part of this engagement process.

1	Mentimeter, Opening Session	– Online – 6 th June
2	World Café	– Wynner House – 10 th June
3	World Café	– Cotteridge Church – 14 th June
4	World Café	– Quinborne Community Centre – 16 th June
5	Pre-Mortem	– Ralph Road – 17 th June – Cancelled (lack of attendees)
6	Pre-Mortem	– Woodcock Street – 20 th June
7	World Café	– Soho House – 21 st June
8	Mentimeter, Disability	– Online – 21 st June
9	Mentimeter, Dance	– Online – 22 nd June
10	Mentimeter, Crafts	– Online – 22 nd June
11	Mentimeter, Arts	– Online – 22 nd June
12	Twitter Engagement	- Twitter – 22 nd June
13	World Café	– Online – 27 th June
14	Mentimeter, Older Adults	– Online – 28 th June
15	Mentimeter, Motherhood	– Online – 28 th June
16	World Café	– Ralph Road – 29 th June
17	Mentimeter, LGBTQ+	- Online – 29 th June
18	Mentimeter, Health & Wellbeing	– Online – 30 th June
19	Mentimeter, Music	– Online – 4 th July
20	World Café	– Muath Hall – 6 th July
21	Mentimeter, Street Art	- Online – 6 th July – Cancelled (lack of attendees)
22	Mentimeter, Visual Arts	– Online – 8 th July
23	World Café	– Latino Community – 11 th July

Appendix 2

Appendix two represents the definitions that were used to define arts, culture, and creativity.

To facilitate understanding and discussions during the sessions, the following definitions of Arts, Culture and Creativity were utilised:

Arts

- An umbrella term for creative activities, which range from architecture, visual arts, crafts, performance art including dance, music and theatre, oral storytelling and literary arts such as poetry.

Culture

- A broad term describing assets from specific groups, such as heritage assets from past generations, e.g., tangibles such as buildings, books, artefacts, and intangibles such as folklore, traditions, language and natural features such as landscapes.

Creativity

- The generation or recognition of ideas, alternatives or possibilities that are original and of value; throughout history creativity has enriched our lives, communities, and boosted our economies.

Appendix 3

Appendix three contains the questions used in the face to face and online World Café sessions.

World Café

1. What does creativity mean to different communities and people in the city, and what does creativity look like to you in your life?
2. What does a creative cultural city look like, and collectively, what do we need to do to shape it?
3. What do we want to see in the future of Birmingham as a creative, cultural city?
4. What role do you think the council and other stakeholders should have in improving the Creativity, Arts and Culture sector in Birmingham?

Appendix 4

Appendix four contains the questions used in the online Mentimeter sessions.

Mentimeter – Music

1. How does Birmingham look regards music and all that goes with it?
2. Are there any barriers to engaging, producing, and working in the music sector in the city?
3. What do you think the new strategy should focus on with music in mind?
4. How do you think the council / stakeholders should be involved in improving arts, culture, and creativity in the city? Generally / specifically

Mentimeter – Visual Arts

1. How does Birmingham look to you regarding the visual arts?
2. Are there any barriers to engaging, producing, working in the visual arts sector?
3. What do you think we need to focus on in the next strategy with the visual arts in mind?
4. How do you feel the council or other stakeholders should be involved in improving arts and culture in the city?

Mentimeter – Arts and Wellbeing

1. What does the interface of arts and culture and health and wellbeing mean to you?
2. How do arts, culture, and heritage play a part in your role?
3. How can we do better with arts and culture in Birmingham to improve health and wellbeing?
4. How can we make arts, culture, and creative pursuits in Birmingham really accessible to everyone?
5. What three things do you want in the new strategy?

Mentimeter – LGBTQ+

1. What comes to mind now that you know why we are having these discussions?
2. How does Birmingham look regard arts, culture, and creativity for the LGBTQ+ community?
3. Are there any barriers that the LGBTQ+ community faces to engage with arts, culture, and creativity?
4. What do you think the new strategy should focus on with the LGBTQ+ community in mind?

Mentimeter – Motherhood

1. What role do you think heritage, culture, and creativity play in Motherhood?
2. What does a truly creative Birmingham look like?
3. What would a truly creative Birmingham that accommodates the needs of mothers look like?
4. How can we work to include mothers in shaping the future for Birmingham as a stronger creative, cultural city?
5. What do you think the council's role is in improving the creative, arts, and culture sector in Birmingham?

Mentimeter – Dance

1. What comes to mind when thinking about dance in Birmingham?
2. How do you feel dance fits within Birmingham? How is it represented?
3. How accessible is dance in Birmingham for all people of all ages and backgrounds?
4. How would you like to see dance develop in the city?
5. How can the council improve dance in Birmingham? What would the council need to do to project this nationally/internationally?

Mentimeter – Arts

1. What comes to mind when thinking about the arts in Birmingham?
2. How do you feel the arts fits within Birmingham? How is it represented?
3. How accessible are the arts in Birmingham for all people of all ages and backgrounds?
4. How would you like to see the arts develop in the city?
5. How can the council improve the arts in Birmingham? What would the council need to do to project this nationally/internationally?

Mentimeter – Crafts

1. What comes to mind when thinking about crafts and craftwork in Birmingham?
2. How do you feel crafts and craftwork fit within Birmingham? How are they represented?
3. How accessible are crafts and craftwork in Birmingham for all people of all ages and backgrounds?
4. How would you like to see crafts and craftwork develop in the city?
5. How can the council improve crafts and craftwork in Birmingham? What would the council need to do to project this nationally/internationally?

Mentimeter – People with disabilities

1. What does arts, culture, and creativity look like to you in Birmingham?
2. How do you experience arts, creativity, and culture in the city?
3. How accessible is art and culture in the city?
4. How would you like to see creativity develop in the city?
5. How do you think the council can improve arts culture, and creativity for you?

Mentimeter – Older Adults

1. What does creativity mean to different communities and people in the city, and what does creativity look like to you in your life?
2. What does a creative cultural city look like, and collectively, what do we need to do to shape it?
3. What do we want to see in the future of Birmingham as a creative, cultural city?
4. What role do you think the council and other stakeholders should have in improving the Creativity, Arts and Culture sector in Birmingham?

Appendix 5

Appendix five contains the questions used in the face-to-face Pre-Mortem session.

In-person- Pre-Mortem

Question one

- It is 2033, and Birmingham is a dystopian nightmare.
- The strategy failed, but more than that, it drove a wedge between all those who derive pleasure and value from the arts and culture sector.
- There is infighting, a lack of funding, and a lack of trust.
- Birmingham has done anything but project itself internationally.
- Why?

Question two

- As individuals, write all the reasons for the catastrophe on Post-It-Notes.
- When everyone is done, stick them to the paper.
- Arrange them in groups that share a theme.
- Try to agree with an order of importance/seriousness of the threats.

Appendix 6

Appendix six contain the questions used in the Be Heard Survey.

1. Tell us about your most memorable Creative, Arts and/or Culture experience.
 - a. This was an open question
2. What was your least favourite Creative, Arts and/or Culture experience?
 - a. This was an open question
3. How important are Creativity, Arts and Culture in your life?
 - a. For this question, one of five options needed to be chosen
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important
4. How important is it to attend Arts and/or Culture events that reflect your personal heritage or identity?
 - a. For this question, respondents chose one of five options
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important
5. How important is it to attend Arts and/or Culture events that reflect other communities heritage or identity?
 - a. For this question, respondents chose one of five options
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important
6. Do you participate in any Creative, Arts and/or Cultural activities in Birmingham?
7. Which forms of Art and/or Culture do you most enjoy watching as an audience member?
8. Are you a member of any Creative, Arts or Culture clubs or movements?
9. How do you feel about public art e.g., street art or performances?
10. How important do you think Arts and Culture are to Birmingham in terms of the factors below?
 - a. The response to this question had seven different categories, which were health and wellbeing, economic growth, job offer, education, community cohesion, crime reduction, visitors and tourism.
 - b. Respondents could choose one of the following options
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important

11. How important do you think it is to raise awareness of Arts and Culture in Birmingham?
 - a. Respondents could choose on of the following five options
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important
12. How do you think Birmingham as a city can empower communities to share their Creativity, Art and Culture?
13. Do you feel empowered to share your community's Arts and Culture with the wider community?
14. What do you think the council's role should be in Creativity, Arts and Culture?
15. Do you feel the council does enough to promote or champion Creativity, Arts and Culture in your community?
16. In terms of where the Council invests resources into Arts and Culture in the city, what outcomes do you think the council should invest in? (Please rank the following potential outcomes in order of importance to you, where 1 is "not important" and 8 is "very Important")
 - a. For this question, there were eight options, and it asked respondents to rank the answers from most important to least important. The options were improving health and wellbeing, creating jobs, education, community cohesion, crime reduction, artistic expression, public art, and tourism.
17. What % of the council's budget do you think should be spent on Arts and Culture in the city each year? The total budget is just below £3.2 billion, so 1% is roughly £32 million. To give comparison the Council currently spends around 1% of the budget on providing health visiting services across the Council, about 0.02% on sexual health services and about 14% on adult social care services.
 - a. The options for this questions were 0.01% (£320,000), 0.05% (£1.6 million), 0.1% (£3.2 million), 0.5% (£16 million), 1% (£32 million), and 2% (£64 million)
18. Are there any other outcomes that the Council should focus on when funding Creativity, Arts and Culture in the city?
19. How easy do you find it to access Arts and Culture in Birmingham?
 - a. The respondents chose one of the following five options
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important

20. How easy do you think it is to access information about Creativity, Arts and Culture in Birmingham?
- a. The respondents chose one of the following five options
 - i. Not important
 - ii. Somewhat important
 - iii. Important
 - iv. Very important
 - v. Extremely important
21. What, if any, are the barriers to accessing Creativity, Arts and Culture in Birmingham?
22. Do you feel that there are enough Creative, Arts and/or Culture events available for your learning/enjoyment/leisure locally?
23. Do you feel you have access to the right type of Arts and Culture events to fit your needs?
24. How far are you willing to travel to attend an Art or Culture event or exhibition that you are interested in?
- a. There were five options for this question
 - i. Less than one mile
 - ii. One mile
 - iii. One to three miles
 - iv. Four to six miles
 - v. More than seven miles
25. Thinking about the future of Creativity, Arts and Culture in the city, what would be your vision for the future of Birmingham?
26. Do you think Birmingham is a city that offers good job opportunities for creative people?
27. Are there any key people that you think should be involved in developing the vision for the creative future of Birmingham?
28. How do you think we as a city can support a better creative sector in Birmingham now and in the future?
29. What do you think we can do as a city to collectively build a legacy for creativity as we approach the Commonwealth Games?

30. Which age group applies to you?

a. The options were split up as follows

- i. Zero to four years
- ii. Five to nine years
- iii. 10 – 14 years
- iv. 15 – 17 years
- v. 18 – 19 years
- vi. 20 – 24 years
- vii. 25 – 29 years
- viii. 30 – 34 years
- ix. 35 – 39 years
- x. 40 – 44 years
- xi. 45 – 49 years
- xii. 50 – 54 years
- xiii. 55 – 59 years
- xiv. 60 – 64 years
- xv. 65 – 69 years
- xvi. 70 – 74 years
- xvii. 75 – 79 years
- xviii. 80 – 84 years
- xix. 85 years or more
- xx. Prefer not to say

31. What is your gender?

a. There were seven options for this question

- i. Male
- ii. Female
- iii. Non-binary
- iv. Transgender
- v. Intersex
- vi. Other (please specify)
- vii. Prefer not to say

32. What is your ethnic group?

a. The following options were available for this question

- i. English / Welsh / Scottish / Northern Irish / British
- ii. Irish
- iii. Gypsy or Irish Traveller
- iv. Polish
- v. Baltic States
- vi. Jewish
- vii. Other White European (including Mixed European)
- viii. Any other White background (please specify below)
- ix. White and Black Caribbean / African
- x. White and Asian
- xi. Any other mixed background (please specify)
- xii. Afghani
- xiii. Bangladeshi
- xiv. British Asian
- xv. Chinese
- xvi. Filipino
- xvii. Indian Sikh
- xviii. Indian Other
- xix. Sri Lankan
- xx. Vietnamese
- xxi. Any other Asian background (please specify)
- xxii. African
- xxiii. Black British
- xxiv. Caribbean
- xxv. Somali
- xxvi. Any other Black / African / Caribbean background (please specify)
- xxvii. Arab
- xxviii. Iranian
- xxix. Kurdish
- xxx. Yemeni
- xxxi. Any other ethnic group (please specify)
- xxxii. Prefer not to say

33. Are you in employment at the moment?

a. The following options were available

- i. Yes
- ii. No
- iii. Prefer not to say

34. Do you work, or study, in the arts, culture, craft or creativity profession?

- a. This question was in two parts
- b. For part one, the options were
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Not applicable
 - iv. Prefer not to say
- c. For part two, the options were
 - i. Visual arts
 - ii. Cultural sites
 - iii. Performing arts
 - iv. Traditional cultural expression
 - v. Audio-visuals
 - vi. Publishing and printed media
 - vii. Design
 - viii. Creative services
 - ix. New media
 - x. Other (please specify)

35. Do you volunteer with an arts or creative organisation?

- a. This question was split into two parts
- b. For part one, the following options were available
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Not applicable
 - iv. Prefer not to say
- c. For part two, the following options were available
 - i. Visual arts
 - ii. Cultural sites
 - iii. Performing arts
 - iv. Traditional cultural expression
 - v. Audio visuals
 - vi. Publishing and printed media
 - vii. Design
 - viii. Creative services
 - ix. New media
 - x. Other (please specify)

36. What is your connection with Birmingham? (tick all that apply)

- a. The following options were available for this questions
 - i. Live in Birmingham
 - ii. Work in Birmingham
 - iii. Volunteer in Birmingham
 - iv. Visit arts and cultural organisations / events in Birmingham
 - v. Work with organisations / events in Birmingham
 - vi. Not connected to Birmingham

37. What is your sexual orientation?

- a. The following options were available for this question
 - i. Bisexual
 - ii. Gay or lesbian
 - iii. Heterosexual or straight
 - iv. Other
 - v. Prefer not to say

38. What is your religion or belief?

- a. The following options were available for this questions
 - i. No religion
 - ii. Christian (including Church of England, Catholic, Protestant, and all other Christian denominators)
 - iii. Buddhists
 - iv. Hindu
 - v. Jewish
 - vi. Muslim
 - vii. Sikh
 - viii. Any other religion (please specify)
 - ix. Prefer not to say

39. Do you have a disability?

- a. The following options were available for this question
 - i. Yes
 - ii. No
 - iii. Prefer not to say

40. What is the postcode of where you live? (please provide the first the first part only e.g. B1, B14, B3)

41. What is the postcode of where your work or study? (please provide the first the first part only e.g. B1, B14, B3)

42. Do any of the following life experiences apply to you? (please select all that apply)

a. The following options were available for this question

- i. Veteran
- ii. Homelessness
- iii. Care leaver
- iv. Refugee / asylum seeker
- v. First generation migrant
- vi. Sex worker
- vii. Do not wish to answer
- viii. Other (please specify)

43. What is the total annual household income before tax? Include all incomes used to support household expenditure (e.g., food, utility bills, mortgage, etc.)

a. The following options were available for this questions

- i. Less than £15,000
- ii. £15,000 - £20,000
- iii. £20,000 - £25,000
- iv. £25,000 - £30,000
- v. £30,000 - £40,000
- vi. £40,000 - £50,000
- vii. Over £50,000
- viii. Prefer not to say

Appendix 7

Appendix seven contains the questions that formed the structure for the Twitter engagement event.

1. How important is Arts, Culture and Creativity to you?
2. What is your favourite creative space in Birmingham?
3. Where do you think Arts Culture needs more support?
4. What was the last creative event that you attended and what did you enjoy about it?
5. Does Birmingham have something unique that it can be recognised for? If so, what is it?
6. What kind of creative opportunities do you think Birmingham is missing out on?

Appendix 8

Appendix eight contains the statement of intent that was the final product of this work.

The Creatively Birmingham Statement of Intent

The Creatively Birmingham Statement of Intent sets out our shared ambition, as partners, invested in the creative future of our city, to grow and develop Birmingham's diverse creative, cultural and arts sector over the next decade.

The Birmingham Coat of Arms demonstrates through the figure of the blacksmith and the painter the entwined nature of creativity and industry in our city. Creativity, arts, and culture are positive forces that add meaning to our lives, provide jobs and opportunities, open conversations and connections across communities and draws people to places. The creativity of Birmingham's people, our communities, businesses, and organisations, is part of our past, our present and our bold future as a city.

Our ambition is that Birmingham's diverse and vibrant creative and cultural scene is inclusive, accessible, sustainable and benefits everyone – a growing and evolving cultural offer that is thriving and recognised nationally and internationally as a unique beacon of good practice, inclusion, and quality.

To do this we aim to

- Work with all stakeholders to facilitate new relationships and develop a new cultural approach for our city - The Birmingham Model; A beacon of talent and inclusion within a relevant, localised and flourishing cultural sector.
- Create local creative communities across Birmingham, in which people can meet, collaborate, thrive and be innovative within their own communities of place and culture, becoming a city of interconnected cultural centres.
- Help facilitate safe cultural spaces which allow for inclusive, accessible, affordable, and representational arts and culture.
- Nurture our artist and creatives' aspirations and talents to allow them to reach their full creative potential as part of a vibrant and successful creativity economy in the city

We will achieve these aims by working together to create a new Creatively Birmingham Strategy that delivers clear career pathways and business opportunities for creativity, arts, and culture in Birmingham, builds collaboration and partnership, enables representation and reconciliation, demonstrates and realises the benefits of the creative, arts and culture sector to health, wellbeing, community cohesion and economic growth.

This strategy will form a framework to guide our partnership and collaboration over the next ten years and will interconnect with the regional arts and cultural strategy and the local delivery strategies such as the heritage, tourism and future city strategies as well as the Future City Plan.

As we work together to develop this strategy we will engage more, be deeper in our listening and learning and work intentionally to enable voices and participation from those who are seldom heard.

Working with Arts Council England and other funders and partners we will be ambitious and realistic in our approach. Looking for opportunities in our journey to highlight and demonstrate the potential benefits of our creative city to health and wellbeing, education and economic growth.

We will work with each other to develop targets and deliverables that allow us to hold each other to account and to see progress is made in meaningful and measurable ways, overseen by the Birmingham Cultural Compact partnership.

The Creatively Birmingham Strategy will deliver our joint commitment to an inclusive, accessible, sustainable and economically vibrant arts, culture and creative sector that is part of our vision for a Bolder Prosperous Birmingham and lives and breathes in every community across Birmingham.